

VZCZCXYZ0001
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMO #0884 0911459
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 311459Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7413
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0505
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 6803

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 000884

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA ASKS FOR A "STRAIGHT ANSWER" ON AFGHAN
MILITARY AID

REF: A. 07 MOSCOW 5098
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 520

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel Russell for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) MFA Afghanistan Desk Chief Yuri Khokhlov called in Poloff on March 31 to tell us Russia sought a "straight answer" from the U.S. on whether there was interest in the Russian offer to provide military aid to Afghanistan (refs). He said that while the GOR has dealt bilaterally with Afghanistan on this issue, it recently learned that Afghan reluctance to accept the weapons was precipitated by the U.S. and NATO. According to Khokhlov, the Afghan MOD told the GOR it was interested in the Russian weapons but had been pressured by NATO not to accept them. The Russian Embassy in Kabul sought clarification from NATO representatives, who said that NATO planned to move the Afghan National Army (ANA) away from using Soviet-era weapons supplied by Poland and the Czech Republic and toward NATO compatible weapons.

[1](#)2. (C) Khokhlov stressed that by rebuffing the Russian offer, the U.S. was sending a "strange message" at a time when the GOR and NATO were discussing expanding cooperation in Afghanistan. He explained that providing weapons to the ANA in order to improve its security abilities was a "key component" of the GOR strategy for Afghanistan signed by Putin. Russia was "ready to go very far" in assisting the ANA -- the GOR simply wished to know if it should continue to pursue this avenue any longer. Khokhlov said the timing of this message to the U.S. was not coincidental given Putin's attendance at the upcoming NATO summit. The Russians chose to deliver the message at the working level but, Khokhlov assured us, the decision to send this message had been made at a high level.
BURNS